

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JULY 23, 2014

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: SANDRA MARKS, ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #3 – WEST END TRANSITWAY (CORRIDOR C)
ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

ISSUE: Update on the West End Transitway (Corridor C) Alternatives Analysis/Environmental Assessment (AA/EA)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Transportation Commission receives an update on:

1. Ongoing and planned public outreach and stakeholder coordination,
2. Analysis of design options carried forward from the Transitway Feasibility Study, and
3. Section 106 / Cultural Resources Analysis.

BACKGROUND: The City's Transportation Master Plan, adopted by Council in 2008, identified three priority corridors that would offer high-quality, high capacity, and reliable transit service within the City. These three corridors (US 1, Duke Street/Eisenhower Avenue, and Van Dorn/Beauregard) connect existing and future development areas that have high densities of residential land use, major activity and employment centers, and connectivity to regional transit including the City's existing and future Metrorail stations.

In 2010, the City began the Transitway Corridor Feasibility Study. As part of the study, a High Capacity Transit Corridor Work Group (CWG) was formed to provide input on issues such as route alignment, cross-sections, methods of operation, vehicle type, land use, ridership, and financial implications for all three corridors.

In December 2013, the City kicked off an Alternatives Analysis / Environmental Assessment (AA/EA) as part of the Federal NEPA Process. The AA/EA will analyze and refine the alignment as defined by the CWG and City Council and to identify any impacts and potential mitigation associated with the recommended alternative. The study is partially funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and is the first step towards applying for a federal Small Starts grant for project design and construction.

DISCUSSION:

Public Outreach and Stakeholder Coordination

The City hosted the first AA/EA public meeting on May 22, 2014 at Landmark Mall. The meeting introduced the project scope and schedule and provided an overview of the AA/EA process. The meeting provided the 30+ attendees with an opportunity to comment on the existing corridor, transit needs along the corridor, and opportunities for improved service in the study area. The next Public Meeting is scheduled for October 2014.

The project team hosted two ‘pop-up’ style outreach events to wrap up the first stage of public outreach. The ‘pop-up’ style outreach is a test run designed to improve our ongoing outreach to Title VI residents along the corridor. The team handed out project flyers, FAQs, and engaged willing participants in a short survey:

- July 16, 2014 – participated in a Van Dorn Plaza Shopping Center open house event from 4:30PM to 7:30PM.
- July 17, 2014 – Van Dorn Metro Station from 4:30PM to 6:30PM.

City Council Resolution No. 2605 established a Policy Advisory Group (PAG) composed of nine members: one developer representative, two transit professionals, three community representatives, and one representative from each of the following: Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, and Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee.

The Policy Advisory Group (PAG) has been established and the first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 30, 2014. The agenda for the first meeting includes an introduction to the project, an overview of the AA/EA process, and discussion of the design options being presented to the Commission.

Attachment #1 includes a Project Schedule and planned public outreach and stakeholder coordination efforts.

Design Options Analysis

The AA/EA process is carrying forward the work of the Transitway Corridors Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study identified several issues that require additional analysis and policy decisions by the City. Attachment #2 provides a summary of the eight design option issues and a recommendation for each. The recommendations are based on analysis provided by the consultant team, discussion with City staff, and Project Team members. Each design option and its associated recommendation will be presented at the Transportation Commission meeting and will be open for discussion, questions, and input.

Section 106 / Cultural Resources

The Section 106 / Cultural Resources Analysis is one element of the EA process that documents the historic and cultural resources along the corridor and recommends mitigation strategies, if necessary. This effort requires extensive coordination with FTA and is scheduled to begin in August.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Project Schedule, including Public Outreach and Stakeholder Coordination

Attachment 2: Summary of Design Options Recommendations